1, Introduction: Shame and Modern Writing

Barry Sheils and Julie Walsh

It is not uncommon for the opening statement of a new academic work to impress upon the reader a self-consciousness concerning the legitimacy of its very existence; to call into question the terms of its own offering as if to outwit the shame of redundancy – of not being wanted, read, or enjoyed. 'Given the state of the field, who now needs a further book on X, Y or Z?'. If such a sentiment is familiar, so too will be the conviction with which the book in question then answers itself: 'it is precisely because of the present configuration of cultural, political or economic exigencies that the need for a book on X, Y or Z is most pressing'. With a prudent deployment of the chiasmus, the author has let us know that she is (already) all-knowing with respect to the prospect of her own exposure – a little like being both the Emperor in his birthday suit, and the bystander who calls him out on it. Might it be that such a play of modest self-effacement and barefaced self-advertisement has a special resonance for the production of writing from within the Academy? As the editors of this volume, we answer 'yes'. Two of shame's constituent components – knowing and seeing – are symptomatically heightened in a modern university system in which the operations of knowledge production and the directives of visibility – being seen to know – collide. But might it also be that, irrespective of institutional setting, the very act of writing – be it the private diary entry, the functional to-do list, or the crafted and much re-drafted excerpt of literary prose – will inevitably leave on the page a residue or trace of shame? Again, our response would be affirmative. And to justify this double 'yes' we must address with care the terms of our engagement, defending the contention that there is no such thing as a writing devoid of shame, but also allowing that shameful writing has different modes through which its histories and affective intensities interact.

This introduction provides an opportunity to argue for the intrinsic relation between shame and writing, while also reflecting on the pronounced

tendency in the contemporary moment towards nominating 'shame' as a phenomenon worthy of analysis. In other words there are two interleaving concerns. The first seeks to identify shame in existing writing practices by acknowledging an economy of affective transfer between writer, reader and text, operating in excess of representation. At one level this economy is manifested through the anecdotes of writerly subjectivity: reflective inhibition; intense frustration; the abjection of the body encountering an impossible task; useless feelings (common to poet and bureaucrat) when confronted with the empty page and the command to write. There are also the humiliations of finding oneself to have been already written: as well as the errors, missteps, and solecisms that slip from the pen, there is the essential reduction of being metricized and forever more 'on the record'. Yet, as we know from the years of 'theory', such ordinary anecdotes persist as textual figures, or deconstructive aporias inside every work we deem legible. And, once acknowledged, they testify to more than subjectivity, but to the linguistic act itself and the force of expulsion required by even the most impersonally scientific prose. What Jean-Jacques Lecercle nominates the 'constitutive remainder' of language, the endless contamination of word and world, and the means by which writing consistently fails to be an autonomous structure of meaning, suggests an important point of apposition here: namely, that '[b]efore it is a practice, language is a body – a body of sounds.' Thus the violence of language, Lecercle emphasizes, 'is to be taken at its most literal, as body penetrating body'.[1] The sound of writing, then, beyond the tip tap of the keyboard or the scratch of the pen, is the sound of a body entering into relation with other bodies, where the risk of shame is ubiquitous.[2]

Our second concern is with the descriptive purchase of the word shame today when thinking about the fact and force of writing-as-exteriorisation. There is little doubt that over the last two decades shame has been enjoying a period of discursive prominence, both within the institution of the university as the subject of academic writing, and in culture more broadly as a theme deserving of serious attention. It is not difficult to suggest several reasons as to why this might have become the case: (1) *The ongoing transformation of the public sphere,*

[1] Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *The Violence of Language.* (London, Routledge: 1990): 229.
[2] 'One does not speak [or write] *of* things or states of affairs, one speaks *in the midst* of states of affairs ('à même les états de choses')' (Ibid.: 226).

and the rise of so-called 'identity' politics, which has been cast in fresh light by the internet and new media forums.[3] The public space and the people who occupy it have further fragmented, it seems, not simply into political, but also ontological segregations, with on-line persona granted a means of addressing themselves beyond any intended, or even recognizable, audience. Such an unprecedented circulation of opinion has undoubtedly made it more difficult within the 'world' of Twitter, Facebook, Wikileaks etc., to define lines of trespass. Indeed it can hardly be ignored that we are writing this book in the age of President Trump whose media presence, relying on emotional hyperbole and *ad hominem* attacks, is both shameful and shaming, and at the same time surrealistically imprecise (e.g. 'you are fake news'[4]). It is this imprecision, virtually obscuring an adjudicated object of interest, which induces in his opponents feelings of shortcoming before the task of formulating a proportional response – a response that will be adequately seen or heard – as well as the shameful temptation to shout-over or to simply disavow and close down all future attempts at engagement. In this way our understanding of the historical moment converges with reflection upon the vicissitudes of our affective lives. (2) *Theorising within the bio-political paradigm, broadly conceived according to Michel Foucault's designation of a shift from the politics of territorial sovereignty to the government of populations.*[5] Though undoubtedly the modern globalising university is itself an agent of 'governance', there have been, within its frame, specifically through studies of sex, sexuality, race, and colonialism, attempts to confront the shame of the institution. To frame bio-political ordinances is to make conspicuous that

[3] Jon Ronson's popular book *So You've Been Publically Shamed* (Picador, 2015) makes explicit the role of the internet in the contemporary instrumentalization of shame as a moral tool, or as a failure of judicious impersonality in debate. In this volume, Martin Eve considers the how the internet has shaped the publishing norms of academic writing.

[4] Locatable as a symptom of so-called 'post-truth politics', one of Trump's signature declarations 'you are fake news', brings to mind Brian Massumi's analysis of the 'affective means' through which Ronald Reagan maintained his leadership: 'It wasn't that people didn't hear his verbal fumbling or recognize the incoherence of his thoughts. […] He was a communicative jerk. […] Reagan transmitted vitality, virtuality, tendency, in sickness and interruption. […] Reagan was many things to many people, but always within a general framework of affective jingoism. Confidence is the apotheosis of affective capture.' (Brian Massumi, *Parables For The Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation.* Duke University Press, 2001: 41-2).

[5] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978.* Edited by Michel Senellart and translated by G. Burchell. (New York, Picador: 2007); *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979.* Edited by Michel Senellart and translated by G. Burchell (London, Palgrave Macmillan: 2008).

shameful line between those bodies given the opportunities of formation, and those rendered disposable through organized processes of representation. (3) *The emergence of the Environmental Humanities.* 'Species shame' may yet be regarded skeptically as a specifically Western pathology, or even as a displaced Malthusian anxiety concerning overpopulation, but the hypothesized advent of a new geological epoch wherein the effects of human culture are said to have irremediably altered the planet's ecosystems, marks an important paradox of university discourse. As an epoch commonly dated to the first Atomic bomb in 1945, itself a result of the Manhattan Project's hypertrophic research practices, what is now sometimes called 'the anthropocene' provides a good example of the university turning upon the shame of its own history. (4) *The turn to affect.* Though canonized in anthologies such as *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* (2007) and *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010), affect remains a difficult term to delineate, sometimes associated with the materialism of modern brain science, and sometimes with the reputed demise of poststructuralism.[6] Affect is often distinguished from emotion,[7] and in the most general terms used to signal investments in pre-linguistic embodiment, generative intensity and the inassimilable relations of *becoming* (see for example, Patricia Clough, Brian Massumi, and, always standing in the background, the work of Gilles Deleuze).[8] In the most optimistic readings, affect offers us a radical contrast to theories of emotion that conservatively bind us to an already coded world of objects. For Silvan Tompkins, the mid 20th century psychologist whose work, introduced by Adam Frank and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, has proven so influential in this field, shame/humiliation takes its place as one of nine basic affects.[9] Importantly,

[6] Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (Eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social.* Durham and London, Duke University Press: 2007; Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader.* Durham and London, Duke University Press: 2010.

[7] Jonathan Flatley, for example, writes that whereas '*emotion* suggests something that happens inside and tends toward outward expression, *affect* indicates something relational and transformative.' See Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism.* (Harvard University Press, 2008): 12. Sara Ahmed, however, has argued convincingly against positing a clean distinction between emotion and affect, not least because the 'contrast between a mobile impersonal affect and a contained personal emotion suggests that the affect/emotion distinction can operate as a gendered distinction.' See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion (2nd edition).* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014): 207.

[8] Patricia Ticineto Clough, *Autoaffection: Unconscious Thought in the Age of Technology.* (Minneapolis, Minnesota Press: 2000); Massumi, Op. cit.

[9] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Eds.), *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader.* (Durham and London, Duke University Press: 1995).

within this psycho-biological paradigm shame is not determined by particular scenes: although a certain scene might be 'culturally scripted' to direct and contain our shame – a child being beaten by an adult, say – we cannot say of it that is it *necessarily* shameful.[10] This is because the intensity of an affect remains independent of (autonomous from) the object it attaches to.[11] As we shall see throughout this volume, shame has most often come to occupy the space between affect and discourse: on the one hand pointing towards the auto-affective capacities of embodiment, and on the other to the reflexive component of being ashamed (the shame of shame, or shame's impropriety), which involves the suspicion that we are feeling someone else's shame, or, indeed, that our felt shame disregards, *affectively* short-circuits, the attempt to understand its historical conditions.

If academic writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences has conventionally been granted a critical function, and more lately a melancholic cast of mind (consider the influence of Judith Butler's work), then perhaps, with the fourfold tendency towards shame just outlined, it has become, at last, a truly confessional mode. Certainly we can say of recent works (especially by those working within anti-colonial and queer paradigms) that there is an increased recognition of the embodied relations that stand at the heart of our knowledge economies – with consequences for our understanding of academic writing conventions. Whether it is Jacques Derrida standing wet and naked before his cat, Elspeth Probyn receiving an email from an angry, humiliated colleague, or Sedgwick facing the empty space where the Twin Towers once stood, the shame idiom has come to involve the interpenetration of personal anecdote with theory.[12] Dodie Bellamy, (whose life writing is discussed further by Kaye Mitchell in this volume), writes of how oppressive she finds the impersonality of

[10] Ahmed offers a necessary reminder *vis a vis* Tomkins: it is not enough to say that cultural scripts channel our biological affects in certain directions, we must also admit that cultural scripts – the script of the stranger, say – *generate* affects, including shame, by creating general receptacles for affect using historically particular images: is the black face more strange than the white face; and is it therefore more 'natural' that I attach the affect of fear there? 'Sticky' is the term Ahmed uses to designate the emotional *and* affective dimensions which underlie all research. We are attached to our knowledge in various complicated and complicit ways.

[11] Massumi, Op. cit.: 35.

[12] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Translated by David Wills. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009); Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2005); Eve Kosofky Sedgwick, *Touching, Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham & London, Duke University Press: 2003).

academic essays: 'how exciting – and important – [it is] to undermine the patriarchal hegemony that created the MLA Style Sheet'. Or, as she puts it more succinctly a page later: 'what the fuck I wanted to do was to shit on academic pretension.'[13] Inevitably, such confessions are as narcissistic as they are honest: as invested in the affective capacities of being an embodied self as in the admission of particular historical transgressions. In this context, the noticeable move away from the term guilt towards shame in university writing (a longer-term trend discussed further below) stands alongside the ubiquity of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), a novel whose protagonist David Lurie is a Communications Professor (erstwhile Comparative Literature Professor) transgressing the terms of his office by sexually accosting a student.[14] Lurie's adamant refusal to display his shame in the University's Committee of Inquiry, which he deems an improper and performative extrapolation from the rationalization of his admitted guilt, haunts the rest of the novel. Having initially dismissed as *unnecessary* his personal humiliation before others, by the end of the book, once associated to a series of violent humiliations in the South African countryside, including the rape of his daughter by local men (or boys) and the hopeless labour of euthanizing unwanted dogs, Lurie come to embody the very *necessity* of shame. *Disgrace* is a novel in which the university discourse can be no more separated from the decolonizing politics of South Africa than the exchangeable abstractions of the law can be separated from the shameful entanglements of non-exchangeable bodies contesting space.

With this chastening coordinate in mind, we introduce the essays in this volume – all originated from the American and European university systems – as fundamentally shameful. However, this is not to say they are offered complacently. While it is clear that this work, like any other can be read for what it omits, we aim to draw together two facets of shame through the question of literary and academic writing. First, the general shame produced by all writing: that of being superfluous, of making the proper improper, of exposing more than it is necessary to expose. And second, the historical situations which force us to read shame's general auto-affective character in more specifically political ways.

[13] Dodie Bellamy, *When the Sick Rule the World.* (South Pasadena Semiotext(e): 2015): 53; 55.
[14] J.M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London, Secker & Warburg: 1999).

After giving further thought to the general dynamics of shame – its pathology, tense, and questionable, though mythopoeic, universality – we shall consider three particularizing histories which underlie, we suggest, the constituency of modern writing: the shame of the anthropological gaze; the shame of bearing witness to historical catastrophes such as the Holocaust; and the shame of acknowledging the structural violence of colonization.

Shame, writing, action

We can begin, then, by considering the grammar of shame. The first and quite obvious observation to note is that shame can be deployed as a noun and as a verb.[15] And yet it is rare that we encounter the abstract noun 'shame' without at least the implication of action, and of movement. If I am paralyzed by shame, trapped *within* the confines of my own self, it is probably because I have been caught *out*. While it is me who feels exposed, trapped in my body, it is also always my body entered into a relation with other bodies – I am ashamed when I find myself delineated or differentiated by being out of place. As Liz Constable reminds us, there is a sense in which shame cannot be said to "belong" to anybody, despite being very much about the problem of belonging.[16] Another way of putting this, in keeping with most famous depiction of shame in the canon of European art, Masaccio's *The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (1425), is to say that shame is scenographic rather than, strictly speaking, psychological: it is a felt condition which also has to be *seen* to be felt, and which therefore always elucidates something of the space in which it occurs. It is an internal feeling which actively founds the external background against which it can be

[15] Ranjana Khanna has spelt out some of the intricacies of shame's grammar in the following passage: 'Is it always in response to a regulative ideal? Is it constituted through that regulation? Or is it organic? Is it a state in itself, or is it a dynamic entity even if not always public in the most literal sense? Whether verb (to shame) or noun (shame) one has to consider whether some kind of action is involved in both. Is it transitive or intransitive? Reflexive or not? Does its action pass over to an object or not? Is it a response to an object, or a function of being-in-the-world?' Ranjana Khanna, 'Fabric, skin, *honte*-ologie' in *Shame and Sexuality: Psychoanalysis and Visual Culture.* Edited by Claire Pajaczkowska and Ivan Ward. (Hove: Routledge, 2008): 159-179.

[16] Constable argues that the experience of shame 'needs to be understood as both an *intrapsychic* and *intersubjective* lens through which a sense of belonging is magnified or shattered, an affect intensely linked to what it means to belong, to the processes of fitting in, as well as to those of becoming a misfit.' E. L. Constable, 'Introduction: States of Shame' in *L'Esprit Créateur* (39.4. 1999: 3-12): 6.

witnessed. Related to this scenic visualization of my own shame, is the phenomenology of vicarious shame, a common and yet somehow extraordinary experience of shame's mobility, in which the witness, ostensibly standing outside the scene, suddenly becomes the object within. More spectacular than a voluntary identification with others, understood as sympathy or compassion, say, vicarious shame potentially rips through the contours of the subject, throwing into disarray the formal distinctions between inside and outside, background and foreground.

The best known of several attempts in mid-twentieth-century French philosophy to capture the inter-scopic and vicarious predicament of shame is Jean Paul Sartre's discussion of the look [le regard], specifically the interaction between the transcendent subject perceiving others [les autres[in the world and the same subject finding himself being looked at by the Other [l'Autrui]. For Sartre it is the enigma of the Other's unperceivable eyes, (those which are looking at me!), which allows me to apprehend my own vulnerability: 'that I have a body which can be hurt, that I occupy a place and that I can not in any case escape from the space in which I am without defense'.[17] The snooping man outside the door, leaning over the keyhole, feels footsteps behind him: he is *seen* looking, and thereby given a situation, revealed to himself as fallen *into* the world. 'It is shame or pride which reveals to me the Other's look and myself at the end of that look. It is the shame or pride which makes me *live*, not *know* the situation of being looked at,' writes Sartre; and later, that pride or shame is 'the feeling of being finally what I am but elsewhere, over there for the Other'.[18] In Sartre's account, there is something inherently shameful about ego formation, about the fact that 'I have my foundation outside myself'.[19] It is the Other who confers upon me a boundary, and who spatialises and temporalizes my self beyond (in excess of) the terms of a transcendent subjective consciousness. In

[17] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology.* Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. (Oxon, Routledge Classics: 2003 [1943]): 282.
[18] Ibid.: 284-5; 291. We can note that Sartre seems to share with the poet William Blake the intuition that 'Shame is Prides cloke'. William Blake, 'The Proverbs of Hell' in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake.* Edited by David V. Erdman (Berkley, University of California Press: 2008): 36.
[19] Sartre, Op. cit.: 284.

the grand tradition of Hegelian phenomenology what is most shameful is that I depend upon the freedom of the Other's look in order to recognize myself.

Emmanuel Levinas, writing before Sartre in 1935 on the theme of escape, and more precisely on the *inescapably* of being oneself, recalls us to a very ordinary instance of the self's spilling over itself: 'The sick person in isolation, who 'was taken ill' and who has no choice but to vomit, is still scandalized by himself.'[20] Here shame arises with the confusion between bodily isolation and exposure before the Other, and is manifest through an act of physical expulsion which is at once an illness and a catharsis, a depletion and a surplus of being. The scene poses a question, not unrelated to the question posed by the scene of writing: *is this vomit me?*

If shame threatens to disrupt our boundaries in this way, leaving us stripped of the confidence to be proprietorial (*am I merely an object in someone else's world?*), we might also expect it to disturb our language. Indeed, the prefix 'dis', suggesting division or dual motion (a two-way-ness), gives us a ready clue to the work that shame does: in the work of dislocation, displacement and dispossession, shame enacts an undoing or a becoming undone – *I am shattered, and out-of-place*. And yet, equally, in its proximity to disgust, and what Silvan Tomkins has called 'dissmell', shame enacts a recall to the finitude of the body – *I am sequestered here, smelling my own death*. This duality, of being at once displaced and inescapably oneself, is the ontological enactment of shame as a private feeling which always elaborates a public world. The subject who feels ashamed is never quite alone; and contrariwise, the subject who calls down shame upon another, availing of the *dis* of disgust or disrespect, never quite belongs to the public world in the way he imagines. If I have put you in your place in the name of some public law or morality, then the chances are that in the process I have displaced myself. This is what the sick man in isolation and the offended man in the street demonstrate, together: that shame is a relational and double-dealing sentiment, and that the shame of shame invariably rebounds.

[20] Emmanuel Levinas writes of 'the shame of being there', the scandal of having a body and being, inescapably, oneself: 'The sick person in isolation, who 'was taken ill' and who has no choice but to vomit, is still scandalized by himself.' *On Escape* [*De l'évasion*]. Translated by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003 [1935]): 67.

Tomkins' work is especially rich when describing the rebounding dynamism of the shame affect. His most pithy definition of shame as 'the incomplete reduction of interest or joy' draws our attention to those social attachments that obdurately remain after the self-protective work of inhibition or closure has taken place.[21] Here, the scene underlying all such attachments is psychoanalytic in character, performing the disruption of the infant-mother gestalt: the infant's turning away, determinative of the ego, remains nonetheless dependent upon the nourishments of the maternal world. This withdrawal or contraction of self, combined with persistent interest in the Other, sets the terms for all subsequent scenes of social shame. Such scenes are empirically diverse of course, as well as being paradoxical, and they place a writerly demand upon those who would seek to describe them. Indeed, Tomkins' writing on this topic is 'astonishingly heterogeneous' according to Sedgwick and Frank; it 'nurtures, pacifies, replenishes, then sets the idea in motion again'.[22] Certainly it delights in qualifications and indeterminate catalogues, to an extent that Sedgwick and Frank deem almost Proustian, and its speculative accounts of subjective experience bring the scientific ambition of his project (to map the basic affects) and the idiosyncratic nature of his expression into perilously close agreement. Here is an example we have picked out in which it is clear that Tomkins has a writing *style*:

> Let us consider next the varieties of sources of shame which arise from love, friendship, and close interpersonal relationships. If I wish to touch you but do not wish to be touched, I may feel ashamed. If I wish to look at you but you do not wish me to, I may feel ashamed. If I wish you to look at me but you do not, I may feel ashamed. If I wish to look at you and at the same time wish that you look at me, I can be shamed. If I wish to be close to you but you move away, I am ashamed. If I wish to suck or bite your body and you are reluctant, I can become ashamed. If I

[21] Silvan Tomkins in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank (Eds.), *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995): 134.
[22] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, 'Shame in the Cybernetic Fold' in *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*. Edited by Sedgwick, Adam Frank. (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1995:1-28): 3.

> wish to hug you or you hug me or we hug each other and you do not reciprocate my wishes, I feel ashamed. If I wish to have sexual intercourse with you but you do not, I am ashamed.[23]

With all these 'ifs' we are assured that these are imaginative, rather than strictly clinical, vignettes, pointing out shame's mimetic character, and relating it to the reflexivity of the look – the looking and being looked at of Sartre's regard. However, the phenomenology of the look is not the whole point in Tomkins' text; the point is also the too-muchness of the writing. Tomkins sets out to catalogue examples of shame, but since there is no totality of circumstances which would make this open-ended list scientifically comprehensive, we are drawn to its rhetorical wantonness ('If I wish to suck or bite your body and you are reluctant…'). Sedgwick and Frank's fascination with this style can be restated as the realization that shame is not simply what Tomkins writes about; it is *in* his writing. The pleasures of reading and writing shame – pleasures forever adjoined to reluctance, repetition, frustration and block – are not merely incidental to the theme.

We may elucidate this point by considering a literary example from George Eliot's 1876 novel *Daniel Deronda* in which the phenomenology of a blush (that attributed to Gwendolen Harlath, one of the novel's two major characters) collides with the demands of narrative sense.[24] Gwendolen is vexed to have been seen blushing, and so performs the self-protective gymnastic of wheeling away from company:

> If any had noticed her blush as significant, they had certainly not interpreted it by the secret windings and recesses of her feelings. A blush is no language: only a dubious flag-signal which may mean either of two contradictories. Deronda alone had a faint guess at

[23] Silvan Tomkins, 'Shame-Humiliation and Contempt-Disgust' in *Shame and Its Sisters*, (Ibid. 133-178): 152.
[24] See also W. Ray Crozier's 'The blush: literary and psychological perspectives' in *The Theory of Social Behaviour.* Vol, 46. No. 4 (2016: 502-516): 503.

> some part of her feeling; but while he was observing her he was himself under observation.[25]

Gwendolen laments the fact that the blush has entered her into an inter-scopic social relation before, or outside of, linguistic representation. This is a lament which poses a formative question to the narrative order, the blush being at once pre-linguistic ('no language') and productive of excessive linguistic signification ('If any had noticed her blush as significant, they had certainly not interpreted it by the secret […] of her feelings'). In one view we can conclude, in Brian Massumi's phrase, that 'skin is faster than the word', which is to say that it registers an order of temporality capable of interrupting narrated time: Gwendolen's blush provides a trace of affective intensity which reveals the narrative order of the novel to be a form of cover-up, sense disguising nonsense.[26] And yet, the very same blush is also readable as the iteration of narrative convention, specifically within the romantic-political arena of the Victorian novel, the conventional prolepsis of a character's red face anticipating an idealised sexual and social union: that Gwendolen blushes and Deronda sees her blush establishes the decorous terms of erotic estrangement which we expect to be overcome over the course of the narrative. Ultimately, however, the narrator's reflections on the contradictoriness of *any* blush gesture beyond Gwendolen's specifically psychological reasons for wanting to deny her blush a meaning, and move us to the novel's striking failure to fulfill a romantic union between Gwendolen and Deronda: the narrative expectations established by the conventions of reading skin are disappointed. Accordingly, the meaninglessness of the blush, its apparent absurdity, points us beyond character to plot; and then, through the false expectation of plot, to the act of writing itself (before any narrative order has been imposed) to the biographical figure George Eliot, or Mary Anne Evans, sitting at her desk, negotiating between the impulse to write and the cover-up of having written.

Most mythic accounts of shame recount this cover-up in the past-historic tense, thus performing the fall from Paradise into language which is also their

[25] George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2014): 354.
[26] Massumi, Op. cit., 25.

explicit theme. Sigmund Freud, for example, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* invites us to consider how shame is intimately associated with the anthropomorphic act of genital exposure that occurred when mankind assumed an 'upright gait'. Shame was first provoked in man when, moving from four legs to two, his genitals became 'visible and in need of protection' (*Scham* in the German, also connoting the male genitals).[27] To say that there must have been such an exposure covered-over in the past, at least in an imagined past, is to suggest that the feeling of shame is temporally as well as spatially arranged. This accords with Giorgio Agamben's treatment of the biblical Fall in his essay 'Nudity'.[28] Agamben stresses that the mythic fall into Original Sin marks the passage from nakedness to nudity, where the former was a mythic state without shame and the latter an event *in time*: Adam and Eve suffer not because of the present fact of their bodily nakedness before God, but rather through God's inference of their nudity beneath the fig leaf.[29] Nudity *happens*; it is something to be *activated:* we can at any moment be denuded of our clothes, conventions, the labours of our civilization – including of language. Which is to say, like Adam and Eve, we exist in anticipation of a return to our original disgrace (our denuded bodies which can never be naked again). Sharing affinities with the critical questioning of the philosopher and the obscene demand of the sadist to 'make flesh appear', the shameful consciousness operates through narrative as the possibility of its unraveling. It is when we *know* that language covers us that we feel historically vulnerable to being exposed.[30]

What is most remarkable about the previously quoted passage from *Daniel Deronda*, then, is that its discursive intervention comes so close to denuding its own narrative elaboration ('no language'), thereby exposing the scandal of writing itself. It comes close to confessing, in other words, the contingent (not already meaningfully coded) interaction between a body and the text. Whilst in anthropological or psycho-biological terms the blush is taken for a

[27] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis., 1961 [1930]): 99.
[28] Giorgio Agamben, 'Nudity' in *Nudities*. Translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010: 55-90).
[29] Ibid.: 68.
[30] Ibid.: 74.

conventional manifestation of shame, once figured in literature it also potentially reflects a doubleness inherent to the narrative act: writing as sublimation up and away from the body into measured linguistic exchange; and writing as de-sublimation, a writing against, which returns always to an un-exchangeable body's relation to itself. Helen Merell Lynd has written suggestively of how certain modern-period texts give exceptional focus to specific body parts – Dimitri Karamazov's hideous big toes, for example, or Phillip's clubfoot in W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*.[31] In such cases, acknowledged shame is indexed to a single body's relation to itself; the characters in these novels suffer not primarily because of exposure before others, but rather due to the necessity of bearing unrelenting witness to themselves. Shame, offers Jacqueline Rose, is 'the only affect which works internally, passing from one to another part of the self.'[32] The blush illustrates such an understanding: transferential in nature, it also presents a kind of proof of the shameful body as auto-poetic; it is the beacon for a subjectivity generating its own content in significant separation from a larger, more objective history.[33] Such dissociation of character from plot is a familiar modernist trope, of course, as is the sense of affective disproportion which accompanies it. Lynd establishes this out-of-jointness through the character of Joseph K. in Kafka's *The Trial* who translates the impersonal circumstances of his abduction by the Law into the pain of personal failure: he felt 'the shame of being delivered into the hands of these people by *his* sudden

[31] Helen Merell Lynd, 'The Nature of Shame' in *Guilt and Shame.* Edited by Herbert Morris (California, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971:159-202): 160.

[32] Jacqueline Rose, *On Not Being Able to Sleep: Psychoanalysis and the Modern World.* (Chatto and Windus, London: 2003): 4. Another way of framing this point is that metonymy, which Roman Jakobson famously considered the major device of realist fiction, nominating the synecdochic details used by Tolstoy as exemplary (Anna Karenina's handbag, the bare shoulders of a female character in *War and Peace*), gets impossibly stuck as the physical part begins to confound the organizing intelligence of the narrator who wanted to put everything into symbolic relation. (Jakobson, *Fundamentals of Language (2nd Edition)*. (Berlin/New York, Mouton de Gruyter: 2002 [1956]): 90-96.

[33] Socially and narratively speaking (in terms of modest witness) the blush is both a defense against, but also an oblique invitation to, the other's desire. It is also synesthetic, where synesthesia originally, in physiological discourse, referred to a stimulation applied to one part of the body felt in another. The blush we might say is exemplarily synesthetic since it registers a feeling or sensation whose cause is almost never treated organically, or localized etiologically in the face; rather it is overwhelmingly taken up and transferred within a cultural and symbolic network of interpretations which render its material sensation essentially immaterial, or 'merely psychological', and carefully translates the priapic exhibitionism of a red face into the socialized and veiling terms: coy, shy, modest, shrinking violet. The idealized 'polite society', a society of sensible subjects – which is to say, subjects who have acquired sensibility – depends on some degree of synesthetic acumen in order to organize the appropriate distance between bodies.

weakness' (emphasis ours).[34] The loss of a comprehensible position within a broad network of symbolic meanings at once reduces and intensifies K.'s experience of selfhood: the ashamed self becomes an excessive burden.

It remains unclear, however, whether shame is the cause or the effect of such a characteristic falling short of a storyline, since the formal disconnect produced by K.'s removal from the assurances of plot (a plot in which we might eventually find out who has been spreading lies about Joseph K.) also ensures that the author-function is contaminated by the affective life of the protagonist. To say, for instance, that K. is Kafkaesque, though stopping just short of saying he is indeed 'Kafka', nonetheless sustains the suspicion that through the impersonality of the written form moves the personality of the artistic self. Likewise, Henry James's prefaces, or Virginia Woolf's essays offer more than secondary explanations to those works they are often seen to accompany; rather they supplement and inter-penetrate, even potentially undermine the formal cohesion of the authors' named fictions. For Sedgwick, in her essay 'Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*', James's prefaces are 'a strategy for dramatizing and integrating shame, in the sense of rendering this potentially paralyzing affect narratively, emotionally, and performatively productive.'[35] The writer emerges, shy and exhibitionist, as the reader of his own work.

Of course this view goes against a certain orthodoxy concerning modernism: if everybody knows that Leopold Bloom in his spit is a *Joycean* artist of the everyday, it still seems a temerity befitting a writer like Wyndham Lewis to suggest that J. Alfred Prufrock and T.S. Eliot share key personality traits. And yet attempts to join the phenomenological and autobiographical to the textual, to place the figure of the writer struggling with the demand to write within a textual frame, are also, in part, readings against the institutionalization of high literary accomplishment. What is now commonly called life writing, as well as blurring the line between fiction and autobiography, often returns us to the figure of the writer: not the institutional author – the proper name who has

[34] Kafka cited in H.M. Lynd, Op cit.: 164.
[35] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*' in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (London & Durham, Duke University Press, 2003: 35-66): 44.

always already written, but the precarious bodily self actively entering into contingent relations with itself and other selves. This kind of writing often invokes its own heritage, including, importantly, classical modes of plain speech, which have been traced genealogically by Foucault as the tradition of Parrhesia. Eschewing the techniques of rhetoric and persuasion, and drawing attention to the vulnerability of the speaker, who was often speaking against the received opinions of those in power, Foucault tells us that classical plain speaking (or risky speech) fulfilled the double function of political and personal critique: from the Cynics to Socrates 'there [was] a relation between the rational discourse, the logos, you are able to use, and the way that you live'.[36] However, Foucault is also careful to distinguish the classical act of speaking plainly through the wisdom of personal experience (ethos) from more modern, Christianized conceptions of confession where the emphasis is upon a sinful and sexualized body. The Greek Cynic Diogenes masturbating in public (a physical manifestation of his many indecorous barbs at those in power), though situated at the very edge of the 'parrhesiastic contract', was yet imbued with the dignity of critique: his was a shameless act designed to call out social contradictions as well as advertise his own ethos. In modern, specifically Christianized terms, however, any such understanding is bound to be further overdetermined according to a reading of spiritual or psycho-pathological symptoms.[37] Similarly, though the essential value of risky speech in Ancient Greece was that of speaking truth to power, the

[36] More fully, Foucault says: 'Here, giving an account of your life, your *bios,* is also not to give a narrative of the historical events that have taken place in your life, but rather to demonstrate whether you are able to show that there is a relation between the rational discourse, the *logos,* you are able to use and the way that you live.' Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech.* Edited by Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles, Semiotext(e): 2001): 97.

[37] For example, the scandalous truth-telling of Diogenes the Cynic does not reverberate in the following contemporary scene of public display offered by Sedgwick:

'I used to ask listeners to join in a thought experiment, visualizing an unwashed, half-insane man who would wander into the lecture hall mumbling loudly, his speech increasingly accusatory and disjointed, and publically urinate in the front of the room, then wander out again. I pictured the excruciation of everyone else in the room: each looking down, wishing to be anywhere else yet conscious of the inexorable fate of being exactly there, inside the individual skin of which each was burningly aware; at the same time, though, unable to stanch the hemorrhage of painful identification with the misbehaving man. That's the double movement shame makes: towards painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality.' Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*' in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (London & Durham, Duke University Press, 2003: 35-66): 37.

tendency of modern confession is rather towards identification with the Law;[38] modern autobiography, instead of exemplifying a critical-philosophical position taken-up against the sophistry of the state, is more usually concerned with an aberrant life, which has to somehow be written or spoken *out* of existence.

This fate of philosophical 'truth' imprisoned within the neuroses of the modern subject is detectable within life writing where the declarative determination to be honest and artless is accompanied by the taint of self-aggrandizing vanity; most famously perhaps is the case of Rousseau's autobiographical writings – his *Confessions* and solitary promenades – in which the political object of his unusually honest scrutiny becomes difficult to distinguish from the range of his persecutory identifications. Recently, Karl Ove Knausgaard's series of memoirs *My Struggle* has enjoyed considerable success by describing in shame-filled terms the author's attempt to escape his shame through writing about it.[39] The separation of this work from classical risky speech is manifest: sick with the conceit of literary fiction, Knausgaard doesn't write to reveal his life as exemplary or even 'interesting', but rather to declare it an unusually wounded one. Often throughout the volumes he abruptly interrupts the flow of his conventional memoiristic accounts of the past to take us to the present-tense scene of authorship: the writer sitting at his desk engaged in writing what we are reading: 'It is now a few minutes past eight o'clock in the morning. It is the fourth of March, 2008. I am sitting in my office, surrounded by books from floor to ceiling, listening to the Swedish band Dungen and thinking about what I have written and where it is leading.'[40] In other words, the narrative fabric unravels, denuding the author of narrative certainty while sticking to the necessity of his subject matter. What is thematically necessary for

[38] In his lectures on 'The Courage of Truth', Foucault identifies the transformation of parrhēsia within Christian discourse, wherein, most tellingly, parrhēsia came to mean, as well as critique, a confidence and open heartedness toward God; a 'trembling obedience' in the mode of confession. Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others II, Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-1984*. Edited by F. Gros and translated by G. Burchell. (Basingstoke, Palgrave: 2011): 332-333.

[39]See the following Guardian piece from 2015 for a discussion of Knausgaard's conviction that 'writing is a way of getting rid of shame':
(https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/01/karl-ove-knausgaard-interview-shame-dancing-in-the-dark).

[40] Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Struggle, Vol. 1: A Death in the Family.* Translated by Don Bartlett (London, Vintage Books: 2013): 24.

Knausgaard, the self to which he returns, is also necessarily a de-formation of plot. As he puts it most programmatically towards the end of Volume 2:

> Over recent years I had increasingly lost faith in literature. I read and thought this is something someone has made up. […] Living like this, with the certainty that everything could equally well have been different, drove you to despair. I couldn't write like this, it wouldn't work, every single sentence was met with the thought: but you're just making this up. It has no value. […] The only genres I saw value in, which still conferred meaning, were diaries and essays, the types of literature that did not deal with narrative, that were not about anything, but just consisted of a voice, the voice of your own personality, a life, a face, a gaze you could meet. What is a work of art if not the gaze of another person? Not directed above us, nor beneath us, but at the same height as our own gaze. Art cannot be experienced collectively, nothing can, art is something you are alone with. You meet its gaze alone.[41]

Here we can see how the author's stipulation against fiction, and his narcissistic itemizing of his own life, though not inviting emulation on ethical grounds, may yet be deemed exemplary as a mode of singularising the self. Famously, Deleuze expressed a similar ambition in his essay 'Literature and Life': 'The shame of being a man – is there any better reason to write?' For Deleuze, true writing must accept the challenge of *becoming* other than man: 'in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or-vegetable, becomes-molecule'. [42] Contemporary strategies of shamelessness, distantly related to the Cynicism of Diogenes, though less objectively critical, exist in order to corrupt pre-existent or generic cultural narratives, which are seen as the representative forms of manhood (standing in for the phallus, symbolic power, and so on). Accordingly, the value of a confession such as Knausgaard's, which aspires through shame to

[41] Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Struggle, Vol 2: A Man in Love*. Translated by Don Bartlett (London, Vintage Books: 2013): 496-7.
[42] Gilles Deleuze, 'Literature and Life' translated by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco in *Critical Inquiry,* Vol.23, No.2 (Winter, 1997), 225-230: 225.

shamelessness, is that it permits, in Deleuze's terms, for life to be 'singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form' – it attempts, in other words, to escape 'its own formalization'.[43]

This view is an affirmative one, and characteristically modernist in its commitment to the non-preexistent. However, while we may want to celebrate any such means of confronting 'the shame of being a man', especially if it promises a reconfiguration of the body through language, therefore disrupting the reproduction of symbolic power; we must also concede that we are, initially at least (as is obvious from the record of Deleuze's examples, including Witold Gombrowicz, J.M.G. Le Clézio, André Dhôtel, D.H. Lawrence, and Kafka) writing only of men. There is indeed a long line of 'honest men', from Augustine through Montaigne to Rousseau and Knausgaard, who have been granted the license to deconstruct the edifice of their cultural authority as men. Consequently, their detailed abjections have been more easily transformed into spiritual virtues. Just as the humility of reading many books (an academic modesty borrowed from the poets) can translate into the institutional fame of being 'well read', so the humiliations of failure, specifically the failure to write, can transform into canonicity (see the remarkable case of Samuel Beckett). A woman writer, by contrast, seldom granted the same historical prestige, is also often denied the terms of a heroic contest with authority. As feminist scholars continue to remind us, not only has much female memoir been precipitously understood as 'hysterical', and in this way denied a priori the dignity of 'truth', but female writing – as reflected on by Woolf and Hélène Cixous among others – is less acquainted, whether by circumstance or design, with the prospect of escape.

Shamelessness, or the ridding of oneself of neurosis, Freud once suggested, is something more often met with among men – a statement replete with implications for female authorship: if women are thought incapable of working through their shame, then what they write of themselves can only be treated as evidence of a pathological condition (indeed the Freudian association of shame with 'genital deficiency' is hard to separate from its characterization as

[43] Ibid.: 225-6.

'a feminine characteristic *par excellence*').[44] It is worth pondering the force of such a preconception once more as we reanimate our argument that shame attends every act of writing, as a necessity, but also a strategy. We might further infer that shame is an historical device which entraps a woman just as soon as it exposes a man in the foolhardy presumption of transgression or escape.[45] If it's true that shame adheres to all bodies that write, then even a cursory look at the record of *what* gets published and *how* tells us that shame does not adhere to all writing bodies in the same way.

Historicizing Shame

For Liz Constable shame presents a 'vicissitudinous ethics' of community; for Christopher Lebron it poses a re-alignment of method when thinking about political justice; Jennifer Biddle conceives of shame as the problem of anthropological looking, whilst it remains 'an arm of the law' for Martha Nussbaum, and an old tool for Jennifer Jacquet, though with potentially new uses.[46] According to David Halperin and Valerie Traub, shame is 'the otherwise' of gay pride; for Francis Broeck (quoted approvingly by Sedgwick and Frank) it is 'the keystone affect' in self-psychology; and for the sociologist Thomas Scheff it is 'the master-emotion of everyday life'.[47] Timothy Bewes reads colonial shame as the cultural form that helps us think the absence of forms; whilst for Giorgio

[44] Though we would do well to note that the offending line from Freud's 1933 lecture 'Femininity' allows the cultural forces of 'convention' to stand alongside anything that could be called feminine essence: 'Shame, which is considered to be a feminine characteristic *par excellence* but is far more a matter of convention than might be supposed, has as its purpose, we believe, concealment of genital deficiency.' Sigmund Freud, 'Femininity'. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXII (1932-1936): New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, 1-182: 132.

[45] For recent exploration of gendered shame see *The Female Face of Shame.* Eds. Erica L. Johnson and Patricia Moran. (Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press: 2003).

[46] Liz Constable, 'Shame' in *MLN.* Vol. 112, No. 4 (1997: 641-665): 643; Christopher Lebron, *The Color of Our Shame: Race and Justice in Our Time.* (New York, Oxford University Press: 2013); Jennifer Biddle, 'Shame' in *Australian Feminist Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 26 (1997: 227-239); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law.* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press: 2004); Jennifer Jacquet. *Is Shame Necessary? New Uses for an Old Tool.* (Allen Lane, Penguin Random House: 2015).

[47] David M. Halperin & Valerie Traub, 'Beyond Gay Pride', in *Gay Shame* Edited by David M. Halperin & Valerie Traub. (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2009: 3-40): 3; Francis Broeck, 'Shame and Its Relationship to Early Narcissistic Developments' in *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis,* Vol. 63 (1982: 369-378): 369 (cited in Sedgwick and Frank, Op. cit.: 6); Thomas Scheff, 'Shame in Self and Society' in *Symbolic Interaction,* Vol. 26. No. 2 (2003: 239-262): 239.

Agamben shame marks a bearing witness to our own passivity when confronted with the inhuman reductions of bio-political regimes.[48]

We have already suggested some reasons why shame might have risen to such prominence in recent years, but equally significant is the comparative retreat of the term guilt. The old complaint that psychoanalysis, for example, treats of guilt but not of shame – in other words that it neglects the body - might now be reversed: where is guilt in the face of so many shame publications? This deserves some further thought; because if focusing on shame indicates a progressive acknowledgement that sovereign laws, their means of adjudication, depend upon prior mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, as well as processes of identification and interpellation, and that the 'human' scale of their operation belies the inhuman determinations of material history (capitalism), then it also suggests a return, a backsliding we might say, from the law-abiding citizen to the question of personal character. Shame attaches to characters, not citizens. By way of illustration we might introduce two character-types met with in the contemporary socio-political landscape, both of whom call forth the question of shame in a way that seems to take precedence from the question of guilt or innocence: the stateless migrant and the whistleblower. Both these characters are familiar figures of excess: the former as the constitutive outsider of settled convention who bears the burden of selfhood in excess of any measured distribution of social affect (to be without papers is to be all body); the latter because she reveals the inconsistency of the system to which she belongs. Both are also figures of shame, shamed and shaming, who, we'd suggest, are complementary in so far as they reveal together how the ordinary function of institutional or state power purveys shame whilst remaining shameless in itself. For our present purposes it is also worth noting that whistleblowing is most often an act of writing or re-writing, carrying the insider language of institutions across an established border. However contested the legacies of Edward Snowden, Julian Assange or Chelsea Manning remain, each character, though in very different ways, has borne the burden of their actions as whistleblowers, embodying a tragic statelessness in stark contrast to the bodiless language of the

[48] Timothy Bewes, *The Event of Postcolonial Shame.* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press: 2011); Giorgio Agamben, 'Shame, or On the Subject' in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive.* Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York, Zone Books, 2002: 87-136).

institutions they opposed. Such an exorcism of institutional bad faith, by no means identical to the migrant experience of being involuntarily outcast or destitute, does at least adjoin that experience; it brings shame to shame and enters into a relation with the other who is outside and not allowed in, the other who has to bear the burden of the self without any guarantee of legal representation.

Rob Halpern's recent poetry collection *Commonplace* (2015) exercises the dangerous prerogative of the whistleblower.[49] Throughout the collection the poet performatively transcribes the autopsy of Al Hanashi Muhammad Ahmad, a detainee of the Guantánamo Bay holding facility who died with a ligature around his neck in 2009. Halpern copies the institutional language which incarcerated, taxonomised and ultimately mortified Al Hanashi's body (*'Autopsy No (b) (6). ID No. (b) (6).'*), contaminating this language with his own supplementary reflections, and, inevitably in the process, carrying it over and out of its 'proper' context.[50] The work reads as an attempt to *feel* impersonal language personally, an effect mostly achieved through the sexualisation of the institutional register. An example:

> Ligature: The ligature is collected as evidence by the NCIS at the scene and examined by the prospector and the observing civilian medical examiner prior to autopsy. The ligature is almost identical to the elastic band of a white brief, medium size 34-36, issued to the detainees at the detention facility. The ligature consists of two segments, with a combined aggregate length of approximately 23½" and width of approximately 1". The smaller of the two segment measures 6½" in length. The ligature fibers are elongated and distorted at the junction of the two cut edges c/w the history of cutting the ligature at the twisted part. There are no bloodstains on the ligature. Boredom distracts and numbness disorients, but arriving at that period I become acutely aware of my body as I write.

[49] Rob Halpern, *Common Place.* (Brooklyn, New York, Ugly Duckling Presse: 2015). We are grateful to Marc Botha for this connection.
[50] Ibid. 32.

> The word "ligature" excites me and my left hand begins caressing my thigh.[51]

The immeasurability of Halpern's desire, its proper to improper border-crossing here, addresses in Al Hanashi someone doubly removed from the possibility of communication: a figure of migration detained outside the law, and a man who is dead. Nonetheless he also conjures an awkward physical intimacy: 'It makes no sense for my hard-on to shame me, opposing the stiffness of his body'.[52] Halpern's language, ethically perilous as a conscious admission of complicity in the exploitation of the silenced other, and vulnerable to censure on the grounds that it expresses narcissistic pathology rather than political or philosophical truth, exhibits a short-circuited relation which can only raise the 'senseless' prospect of shame: a repeated interest which repeatedly falls short of meeting with its object. 'This is not a wet dream, it's a poem, and I want to believe it needs to be written, not simply that it can be. But the degree to which my writing sublimes in private yearning is the degree to which it yields to civic embarrassment'.[53] The shameful necessity of Al Hanashi's fate, its literal inescapability, shames the gratuitousness of Halpern's voluntary act of transcription: they relate according to a conspicuous, unbridgeable difference. No matter how the poet wishes for the necessity of a muse, the impersonality of the work to provide the formal alibi for his writerly ambition, he is recalled to the embarrassing inadequacy of his identifications.

Halpern's project as a writer is also of course a readerly one, reading into and implicitly against the institutional languages which organize Al Hanashi's body. If the institution shames its object by reproducing it as a knowable, quantifiable entity, the critical and poetic response is to ask how the institution can be made to feel or recognize its own shame, beyond merely delegating it to a scapegoat. Halpern's historical coordinates include the recent American wars and other illicit involvements in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere; but his indictment of institutional impersonality – fixing the body biometrically, and constricting its narrative possibilities to the zero-point where an an autopsy

[51] Ibid.: 23.
[52] Ibid.: 31.
[53] Ibid.: 137-8.

becomes its most apt expression – is general. There is a point of apposition here between the dilemmas of the poetic 'I', and the figure of the blush as a sign of excessive subjectivity falling short of plot or historical narrative. We might say of Halpern's 'lyric' mode that it performs the experience too-much face when confronting the involuntary and faceless deformations of the world.

Famously Charles Darwin characterized the blush as 'the most peculiar and the most human of all expressions': an issue of subjectivity, in other words. Yet he also went on to explain it in objective terms as 'the relaxation of the muscular coats of the small arteries, by which the capillaries become filled with blood; and this depends on the proper vaso-motor centre being affected.'[54] The blush, then, is biographical *and* biometric. But what Darwin doesn't fully investigate is how the material triggers he describes are related to particular psychical and historical representations: to what extent do fantasy and imaginative identification *overdetermine* the manifest phenomenon of a red face? How can a blush be *known* if its causes are endlessly confused with its effects? This confusion is most evident when the process of identifying the blush as a material bodily phenomenon is shown to produce the humiliation it claims to study, as in the following quotation.

> [Dr J. Crichton Browne] gives me the case of a married woman, aged twenty-seven, who suffered from epilepsy. On the morning after her arrival in the Asylum, Dr. Browne, together with his assistants, visited her whilst she was in bed. The moment that he approached, she blushed deeply over her cheeks and temples; and the blush spread quickly to her ears. She was much agitated and tremulous. He unfastened the collar of her chemise in order to examine the state of her lungs; and then a brilliant blush rushed over her chest, in an arched line over the upper third of each breast, and extended downwards between the breasts nearly to the ensiform cartilage of the sternum.[55]

[54] Charles Darwin, 'Self-attention – Shame – Shyness – Modesty: Blushing' in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1965 [1872]: 309-346): 309.
[55] Ibid.: 313.

Sally Munt has noted the soft pornographic imaginary which underwrites this passage ('agitated and tremulous') and which Darwin's scientific literalism is not in a position to reflect upon. However, it is important to appreciate that the objectifying regard of Darwin and the Doctor in this scene covers over, not, as we might naively hope, the consoling thought of an equal relation between subjects, but rather the space where this relation is *not* taking place: where the married woman's blush is a blazon of self-enclosure and mute retreat.

In his essay 'Shame, or On the Subject', Giorgio Agamben transfers a similar thought to the institution of the Nazi death camps. We have considered the blush of the writing subject who falls short of plot (Gwendolen's 'no language'), and the blush of the objectified patient, possibly bearing witness to her own objectification (Darwin's 'married woman'). For Agamben, these two positions together infiltrate the dilemmas of Holocaust testimony. His paradigmatic example comes from Robert Antelme's written account of a young Italian student who 'turned pink' after being interpellated by a member of the SS: '*Du komme hier!*'[56] In this unforgettable scene Agamben finds the 'I' 'overcome by its own passivity': the student has entered into a fundamental relation with his own physiological or 'bare' life.[57] 'In shame, the subject […] has no other content than its own desubjectivisation; it becomes witness to its own disorder, its own oblivion as a subject. This double movement which is both subjectivisation and desubjectivisation is shame'.[58] Agamben generalizes this moment –the bearing witness to the material deformation of oneself- so that not only is it paradigmatic for all Holocaust testimony, but it captures in an especially vicious historical circumstance the fundamental task undertaken by the lyric subject of poetry. The lyric 'I' offers testimony as the only remainder of the human when the subject's humanity has been deformed or destroyed.

We might wonder, in this regard, whether the unbearable particularity of the Italian student's case – his autopoiesis standing in excess of the historical circumstance of mass extermination – really connects to the long tradition of poetic testimony where, according to Agamben, the language of shame stands in

[56] Giorgio Agamben, 'Shame, or On the Subject' in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive.* Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York, Zone Books, 2002): 103.
[57] Ibid.: 105.
[58] Ibid.: 106.

the place of a 'missing articulation'?[59] Are we really to imagine poetic experiment on the page as continuous with the Italian student's experience when confronted with his own death? The Italian student doesn't get to write his own poetry (neither did Al Hanashi);[60] rather, he has to be witnessed witnessing himself by Antelme, and therefore, might be said to mark less the exemplary moment of poetic self-testimony, than its crushing defeat. This is a point of consternation for Ruth Leys in her 2007 study *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After.*[61] Leys suggests that Agamben, as well as potentially de-historicising the specificity of what happened at Auschwitz, specifically misreads Antelme. For Antelme the 'pink face' is not simply the phenomenological mark of shame – a subject facing desubjectivisation – but a textual sign transposed to other figures including at one point to a German baby, signaling 'aliveness or vitality'.[62] In other words, for Leys it is significant that Antelme's writerly strategies refuse the institutional reduction which equates the pink face to humiliation: 'Attention to Antelme's own thematisation of pink in the text suggests a different meaning, one that emphasized not the issue of desubjectivisation and shame but of human relatedness and responsibility'.[63]

This is part of Leys's larger argument against shame as it replaces guilt in the discourse on Holocaust testimony. Shame, for Leys, indicates a turn away from complex questions of complicity, intentionality, fantasy, and transference – all terms of linguistic inquiry which allow us to connect bearing witness to 'survivor guilt' – towards what she calls a kind of biopolitical literalism: bearing witness to oneself as pure materiality to be manipulated. Agamben's reading of Antelme is a recent example of this turn according to Leys, inspired by the (re)turn to affect and the new literalism of the (anti-psychoanalytic) materialism

[59] Ibid.: 134.
[60] Though there is an emerging archive of Guantánamo poetry (see for example *Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak,* Edited by Mark Falkoff (University of Iowa Press, 2007); and for critical commentary on such an archive, Judith Butler's *Frames of War*: *When is Life Greivable?* (Verson Books, 2009).
[61] Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After.* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 2007).
[62] Ibid.: 178.
[63] Ibid.: 176.

of neuroscience.[64] Writing is deprived of fantasy in this register, enacting in the same breath a return to Darwin and an omission of Freud.

Ley's argument is invaluable to us for two reasons: first, it demonstrates, by the scope of its genealogy of writing about the Holocaust, the reality of the discursive shift from guilt to shame. Beginning with a discussion of the concept of 'survivor guilt' linked to 'identification with the aggressor', (suggested by Bruno Bettleheim in 1943, framed by William G. Niederland in the early 1960s, and articulated also in Primo Levi's writings), Leys goes onto note that from 1979 on writers who were concerned to challenge the Freudian underpinnings to survivor guilt (especially the problematic implications of the victim's identification with the aggressor) turned to shame as an embodied, materialist alternative to the complexities of transference and fantasy. 'There is a marked tendency in recent trauma theory to treat the traumatic event as something that leaves a 'reality imprint' in the brain,' she writes 'an imprint that in its insistent literality testifies to the existence of a timeless historical truth unaffected by suggestive-mimetic factors or unconscious-symbolic elaboration.' [65] She nominates Terence Des Pres, Lawrence Langer, as well as Agamben, as writers whose work has extended this interpretation.

The second value of Leys's argument is how her account of guilt as both 'suggestive-mimetic' and 'unconscious-symbolic' usefully complicates the guilt-shame distinction. She is not content to reproduce the commonplace opposition between shame as a bodily, ontological concern with our being, and guilt as a mental and moral concern with our deeds. Rather Leys defends guilt as an *emotional* descriptor underpinned by psychoanalytic theory, a theoretical framework which insists that guilt can come before the act, and that *feeling* guilty can be revealed as a cause as much as a consequence of particular deeds. Indeed, following the work of Herbert Fingarette, Leys defends a psychoanalytic conception of guilt against existentialist philosopher Martin Buber who considered the question of 'real' guilt to be beyond the province of psychoanalytic enquiry: 'there exists real guilt,' Buber avers, 'fundamentally

[64] For the broader contours of Leys's critique, see her 'The Turn to Affect: A Critique' in *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 27, No.3 (2011: 434-472).
[65] Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After.* (Princeton, Princeton University Press: 2007): 60.

different from all the anxiety-induced bug bears that are generated in the cavern of the unconscious'.[66] For Buber, the moral destiny of man depends upon his standing in an *objective* relation to others. The gendering of this heroic transparency before the other is probably not insignificant: the active as opposed to the neurotic mind, a legal reality as opposed to an unconscious motive, a man standing objectively in the world as opposed to not-man entangled, dependent, or embattled by the extent of their identifications with and through others. By defending guilt on the basis of its emotional complexity rather than its objective facticity, Leys espouses a distinctively modern position. As James Brown points out in this volume, it was only towards the end of the nineteenth century – coincident with the rise of psychoanalysis – that guilt was first defined in the OED as a *feeling*. Consequently, although Leys's intention seems to be to separate guilt from shame along an historical axis, and make the case for the moral complexity of guilt feelings as against the material literalism of shame, she is also contributing to a broader modern discourse in which it has become more and more difficult to distinguish the ostensible facticity of the former (guilty or not) from the affective intensity of latter. After all, the discursive turn to shame, and the affect theory that underlies it, is not the wholesale rejection of psychoanalysis which Leys depicts it as being; rather, as noted above, Tomkins's mid-century theory of the affects drew on traditions of post-Freudian psychoanalytic writing which emphasized the pre-oedipal mother-infant relation in particular. It may be, then, that instead of only literalising the body and fixing the wound temporally and spatially in morally unsophisticated ways, shame also points us towards even more complex and disordered identifications unregulated by the traditional fable of Oedipal contest between the law of the father and the son.

It is not only in the discourse of Holocaust testimony that the terms of guilt and shame have been disputed and conflated. In anthropology, too, shame and guilt have been said to define particular cultural formations. Writing in 1936, Margaret Mead found only two of what she called 'guilt cultures' out of a selection of thirteen distinct 'primitive peoples': two cultures, that is, whose

[66] Martin Buber, 'Guilt and Guilt Feelings' in *Guilt and Shame.* Edited by Herbert Morris (California, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971:59-81): 67.

ethos was competitive and/or individualistic (rather than cooperative) and therefore closer to the Western European form.[67] The remaining eleven, more cooperative cultures were more likely to be controlled by shame. A 'shame culture', for Mead, is one in which 'the individual is controlled by fear of being shamed, he is safe if no one knows of his misdeed.' In guilt cultures, on the other hand, the individual must atone for his taboo deed in order to 'reestablish the internal balance of the personality'. Mead is careful to allow that shame cultures do not rely exclusively on external or group sanction: shame too, she writes, 'can be internalized within the individual mind'.[68] But the distinction remains categorical nonetheless, between a culture that believes in atonement – the ability to exchange one deed for another – and a culture that believes in the humiliation of character. The most famous amplification of Mead's distinction is Ruth Benedict's work of 1946, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, a text which, even as it was produced on a war-footing, tasked with accounting for the psyche of America's enemy, the Japanese, is careful not to attribute to its general distinction between shame and guilt cultures the status of incompatibility. Both Mead and Benedict, it must be said, though determining a contrast and even a contest in Benedict's case between shame and guilt, also rely on the modern convergence between the two terms: to speak of a guilt culture, after all, allows that guilt is felt and expressed rather than simply adjudicated. Perhaps it should not surprise us that a conceptual opposition bellies some deeper ideological historical confusion, but it remains noteworthy nonetheless. For example, Benedict's historically incentivized research question *why do the Japanese not surrender?* is answered according to the dictates of shame: to surrender for a Japanese soldier would be to wear an ineradicable stain on one's character. The American soldier feels less shame at being captured. The implication is that the American soldier can forgive himself his capture because he knows a future deed is able to atone for it. Underlying this interpretation, however, is the additional premise that the American soldier is able to treat his own captivity *impersonally,* because he has, according to the structure of a guilt culture, abstracted himself from his own experience. By implication at least, he understands himself to be a

[67] Margaret Mead, 'Interpretive Statement' in *Cooperation and Competition Amoung Primitive Peoples*. Edited by Margaret Mead (Boston, Beacon Press: 548-515): 494.
[68] Ibid.

unit of capital for exchange in an economy indebtedness, and therefore bears less personal responsibility for his fate. We can discern in this example an unstated convergence between Benedict's understanding of guilt culture and Nietzschean and Weberian analyses of modern capitalism's structural alliance with Christianity. Considering the political asymmetry which underlies Benedict's guilt-shame opposition (remember American guilt culture has just emerged victorious from war), and the soft imperialism never far from the surface of her project, it is not difficult to read beneath the guise of characterizing guilt culture as favoured for its dynamic means of atoning for past sins, a handbook for the expansion of global markets. Benedict professes admiration for the discipline and self-care of the average Japanese, but equally she praises the cunning of General McArthur for how he has managed to flatter traditional Japanese attitudes the better to succeed with a modern political occupation. Instead of being a conceptual distinction, in other words, the shame-guilt contest is fundamentally ideological, with the former standing in for non-capitalist or 'primitive' cultures, posing the problem of assimilation, and the latter for a dynamic and expressive modernity.

Read in this light, the title of our volume will seem oxymoronic: the more pertinent pairing would be *guilt and modern writing.* Certainly, this is how E.R. Dodds extrapolated from the Mead-Benedict tradition in his 1951 study of the Ancient Greeks.[69] What separates us Moderns from the culture of Sophocles and Euripides, contends Dodds, is the essential difference between our guilt, and Greek shame. We might want to be careful about endorsing such an 'us and them' formulation, however, because it has evolved by means of an alliance between anthropological scholarship and post-war *realpolitik,* and also because such categorical distinctions belie the contaminations of anthropological practice. Jennifer Biddle puts it well in reference to her work with the Warlpiri people: 'anthropologists intentionally put themselves in the out-of-place, in the wrong place, and thus, the place occupied by shame. Even if it is never taught in undergraduate courses, this is the first principle of the ethnographer's sensibility

[69] E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational.* (Los Angeles, California, University of California Press: 1951).

[…] Field work, like shame, exalts self-difference'.[70] Notwithstanding the fact that Benedict carried out no field work when writing *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* – many of her major Japanese informants were acculturated Americans – Biddle's point is wholly pertinent to the shame culture discourse. If the anthropologist's major transgression is that of not looking away (a writerly transgression too we might surmise), then the discourse which formalizes and legitimizes the gaze is stimulating the shame it claims to uncover. In this context Ukai Satoshi has written of the self-perpetuating identification of Japan as a 'shame culture': Japan enters our globalized modernity with this reductive characteristic, known even to itself through such mediations from abroad.[71] But for Biddle there can be no atavistic retreat behind borders where one cannot be seen; it is not simply that anthropologists should be ashamed of themselves and desist with their practice, but rather that they should acknowledge shame as a way of addressing institutional impunity when it comes to knowledge production, and interrogate the always personal experience of shame's projective, mimetic and contagious characteristics.

Bernard Williams is another writer who has disputed the tidiness of the shame-guilt distinction. Though not an ideology critic, and in some sense offering a belated response to E.R. Dodds, the major point of Williams's argument in *Shame and Necessity*[72] is to challenge the unhistorical privileging of guilt in the modern period.[73] Williams finds lodged within the Greek term aidōs, (for Dodds the signifier of ancient shame), values which have become associated with guilt, including indignation, reparation and forgiveness.[74] If the ancients combined aspects of both guilt and shame, Williams surmises, then our modern guilt culture must also contain aspects of shame. Indeed, if we want to give the full picture of our ethical lives we must make the effort to countenance shame. What

[70] Jennifer Biddle, Op. cit.: 232.
[71] Ukai Satoshi, 'The Future of an Affect: The Historicity of Shame' in *Traces: A Multilingual Journal of Cultural Theory.* Edited by Naoki Sakai and Yukiko Hanawa (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, Distributed by Hong Kong University Press, 2001: 3-36). We are grateful to Geoff Gilbert for bringing this coordinate to our attention.
[72] Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity.* (California, University of California Press: 2008 [1993]).
[73] As Williams puts it: 'The mere fact that we have two words does not, in itself, imply that there is any great psychological difference between shame and guilt.' (Ibid.: 89). It is significant in light of our previous discussion that for Williams shame and guilt are both feelings – or psychological states – and, what's more, feelings that may prove difficult if not impossible to distinguish.
[74] Ibid.: 90-1.

is intriguing reading Williams's work today, which converges upon a dispute with a strict Kantian belief in the autonomy of the subject acting in accordance with a universalisable moral principle, is how the conclusion that shame and guilt cannot be kept decisively apart – either historically or psychologically – becomes itself a kind of ethical content. So, for example, considering the primacy of guilt as it turns us 'towards victims' – enquiring about the harm done to others and the terms of reparation – Williams points out how such a guilt morality is only equipped to weigh voluntary or conscious actions. Only shame, he writes, can consider times when personal failings played a role in harming others where no harm was consciously intended. Only shame can square up to the involuntary or unconsciously motivated consequences of action, actions which seem more born of necessity than will. Thus, he writes, 'shame can understand guilt, but guilt cannot understand itself'.[75] Another way of putting this might be that shame is a necessary supplement to guilt. Of course, its concern with personal character, situated within a world of heteronomous attachments to others, who bear witness to the self, conveying esteem and disappointment, can be read as narcissistic when pitched against the ideal of guilt culture: other-directed concern for the victim. Yet as Williams concludes in the postscript to his book, once 'guilt comes to represented simply as the attitude of respect for an abstract law'[76] – removed in other words from consideration of personal anger or fear which produces actions and potentially victims, then its other-directed virtue is devoid of intimacy and sunk by its inflated estimation of the capacity of the rational autonomous mind to hold a moral purview of the world.[77] Put more bluntly than Williams puts it: a principle of justice once historically reified as a universal cultural value can be used to perpetuate rather than address the suffering of victims.

More recently in his work *The Color of Our Shame: Race and Justice in Our Time,* alluded to above, Christopher Lebron has shown how Williams's

[75] Ibid.: 93.
[76] Ibid.: 222.
[77] Williams's claim for the 'heteronomy' of shame – shame as produced through situated relations and often through non-intentional acts – shares a strange affinity with Brian Massumi's argument, noted above, for the *autonomy* of affect where all affects including shame are seen to be triggered independently of intentional objects. Both accounts privilege situated, embodied subjects (potentially narcissistic subjects also), whilst challenging the primacy of a rationally directed conception of human agency.

recuperation of shame's modernity might apply to the specific circumstance of race in America. Whilst we might easily imagine shame attaching itself to the racialized subject – the subject known according to her race – Lebron's study seeks to transfer this phenomenological or psychological fact into a kind of intellectual method: shame is a way to stipulate the difference between what is and what potentially might be the case within a given formal system of justice. In other words, instead of as we might expect appealing to the neutrality of the law (the idea that everyone is equal before the law) as a militation against the determination of character on racial grounds, Lebron suggests, following a Williams-like argument, that we use the question of character and shame in order to make sure the law functions. Like Williams, he offers critique of Kantian systems of morality, specifically John Rawls's distributive theory of justice which models fairness in strategic ignorance of historical conditions of subjectivity. The problem with Rawls's formal model is that although by its light it is unreasonable to defend slavery –and this, says Lebron, is in accordance with the contemporary practice and attitude of most law-abiding American citizens– it is not unreasonable to ignore the effects of slavery. This 'reasonable ignorance', and the problem it infers, cannot be addressed according to a further appeal to the law – by a subscription to a rule of distribution however stringent – but only by returning us to the ethics of shame. Such an ethics 'implicates us in coming up short on our own account, on account of principles and standards for which we have expressed a prior standing preference'.[78] In other words, shame isolates the difference between the formality of the law to which we adhere and the fulfilment of social justice which the law might possibly permit. Instead of eradicating shame, then, Lebron wants to generalize it and put it to work: all Americans should be ashamed; which, in the specific case, is to say all Americans should be racialized insofar as they have not actualized the equality written into their law.

Those writing in a critical postcolonial perspective will find little to surprise them in Lebron's argument, except perhaps his philosopher's faith in the law's ultimate consistency. For Timothy Bewes in his 2011 study *The Event of Postcolonial Shame,* the historical play of identity and difference is the organizing

[78] Lebron, Op. cit.: 22.

principle of both shame and colonialism, extending to all scholarly ethnographies and underlying too the production and persistence of race, which interrupts the purely formal value of the law.[79] Whereas for Lebron shame is a goad working within the terms of the law, as a means of realizing its formal promise of equality, for Bewes shame can only produce the rupture of form and content.[80] Through shame – in the 'event' of shame – all formal strategies of representation are rendered inadequate. It is telling that for Bewes, 'shame is an event of writing'. [81] Pointing both to Holocaust testimony and to contemporary postcolonial literature he says that we don't simply write *about* shameful scenes that once happened, or happened over there, giving them a frame and a salutary meaning which can be represented here and now: rather we encounter shame by and through writing as the inadequacy of the frame and the collapse of meaning. It's not simply that the content of the experience being described exceeds the form of its description (those unspeakable horrors etc.), but rather that through this excess shame is communicated.[82] Shame is an event which produces between the writer-subject and her object the thought of the absence of form.[83] This is an important shift, from content to form, because it reminds us, in the first place, that the shame of a destitute other must rebound upon her witness, and in the second place, because it reveals at the heart of the conceit of formally objectifying experience – *doing justice* to things – lies an unredeemable subjectivity and a perspective founded on exclusion and ignorance.

Bewes's reading of shame as a formal concern, especially pertinent for the ethnographic quandaries of postcoloniality, returns us to the obscure terms of inclusion and exclusion which constitute the field of representation. Given this emphasis on the political margins of form, the point at which it breaks down, we might suggest that he underplays the role of sex and sexuality here, especially as questions concerning the communicability of lived experience and the instability of social relations across political boundaries often come to express their irresolution through the ambiguity of sex. Queer theory's formative engagement

[79] Timothy Bewes, *The Event of Postcolonial Shame.* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press: 2011): 165-166.
[80] Ibid.: 20.
[81] Ibid.: 15.
[82] Ibid.: 39.
[83] Ibid.: 46.

with shame comes through Sedgwick's essay 'Shame, Theatricality and Queer Performativity' in which she characterizes its double movement, 'painful individuation' and 'uncontrollable relationality', as, for queer people, the first structuring fact of identity – identity however without the secure standing of an essence.[84] In broader social terms, queer shame has come to query the politics of gay pride (it is 'pride's otherwise' in Haperin's language) where pride is seen to appeal for legitimation to the political centre, and to be tending, in this way, towards assimilation within normative power structures. Shame is productive in Sedgwick's unapologetically literary sensibility, when there exists a recognition that accompanying its pain is the possibility opened-up by non-assimilation and by the excitement of unsanctioned pleasures. This is no resting place, however, since, even allowing for shame's queer pleasure, the politics of shaming, the asymmetric power relations shame too often implies, persist. The tension between queer and more conventional political readings of shame is well represented in the anthology *Gay Shame,* edited by David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub.[85] This volume risks becoming exemplary for how it showcases its own shame as an institutionally sanctioned writing project. Not only does it advertise its own shortcomings and dismemberments (those writers who refused on political grounds to be included in the publication) but the terms of inclusion and exclusion become quite uncertain as particular contributors insist on expressing within the work their exception from it. As the editors explain in the Introduction, they had conceived the original academic conference 'in such a way as to make the prospect of publishing the proceedings unlikely, if not impossible', for reasons of scope and inclusivity: the ambition to connect queer scholarship to broad social movements, and to encourage the involvement of different non-academic groups including sex-workers and local activists.[86] The feeling that we are indeed reading writing that should have been impossible, a form annulling itself in the event – in this case the event of the original conference – emerges most obviously through two pieces included in the volume which are *almost* not

[84] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Shame, Theatricality, and Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*' in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (London & Durham, Duke University Press, 2003: 35-66): 37.

[85] David M. Halperin & Valerie Traub (eds.), *Gay Shame.* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2009)

[86] Ibid.:5.

there. The first is entitled 'An Open Letter to Douglas Crimp' (not an academic paper) by Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, quoted in full in the editors' introduction. La Foutain-Stokes addresses Crimp's reading of Andy Warhol's 'Screen Test #2' in which the drag queen Mario Montez is objectified and humiliated. For Crimp, Warhol's film is not simply voyeuristic but 'shows a performer in the moment of being exposed'; in Mario's 'irresistible, resplendent vulnerability' (73) we witness his shame, but 'a shame that we accept as also ours, but curiously ours alone'.[87] The erotics of this contagion are rebuked by La Fountain-Stokes in that its abject heroism for shame entirely neglects, renders invisible, Mario Montez's race. Does it matter that it is a non-white body being shamed? And who are we to witness, and narcissistically appropriate, this shame for ourselves, in our strange isolation? Are we inevitably white, as white as Andy Warhol? As a corrective to such assumptions, La Fountain-Stokes invokes the racially alert and consciousness-raising shame writing of Frantz Fanon and Audre Lorde, among others, and stipulates the specificity of Munoz's identity (performative or not) as a queer Puerto Rican. The second nearly-absent contribution is that of Leo Bersani who in his less-than-a-page contribution, as well as expressing his 'disappointment' with the conference, takes the opposite view from La Fountain-Stokes. For Bersani, Crimp's paper was the only genuine attempt to consider shame in its 'psychic dimensions'. For too many, he writes, the politically correct interpretation offers itself: shame is imposed from without by 'evil heterosexism' which it is in all our interests, and all our pleasures, to overcome.[88]

There is something unsettled about the conception of shame which emerges from this debate: marking on one side the productivity of non-assimilation in the lives of queer subjects and on the other the effect of political reduction and oppression along the lines of race. This conflict is further explored by Judith Halberstam, who attended the conference, but, refusing publication of her paper within the volume, professes 'gay shame' an anachronistic idea. Halberstam suspects that 'shame' prefers white male subjects abjecting

[87] Douglas Crimp, 'Mario Montez, For Shame' in *Gay Shame* Edited by David M. Halperin & Valerie Traub. (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2009: 63-75): 73.
[88] Leo Bersani,'Excluding Shame' in *Gay Shame* Edited by David M. Halperin & Valerie Traub. (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2009: 176-177): 176.

themselves before history; it is, she suggests, the feeling of castration, a powerlessness akin to feeling feminized against their will which excites the authority of white gay shame.[89] This means, for Halberstam, the spectre of the shamed other (non-white, non-male) means that questions of race necessarily intersect with those of sex and gender.

This position resonates with Biddle's point, mentioned above, about anthropology and the taboo on looking – the transgression of crossing borders which, she remarks, is also always sexualized.[90] Biddle adds that when anthropology is shown up or shamed in this way, shown up to be less than objective, the fact that the 'best known anthropological practitioner is a woman' is by no means adventitious: 'infamous indeed is Margaret Mead, with all the sexual and sexist undertones implied; conjoined as she and her work have become where the travel, the exotic places, her various husbands and lovers and sex itself, metonymically all unite'.[91] It is the ideological canard of 'Woman' here who is at once shameless enough to dare to look, and crippled by shame, othered by her involvement in a foreign element. Shamed or shameless, Mead, in this view, is not given the license granted to gay white men of *experimenting* with the erotics of contagion. Halberstam argues that 'shame for women, and shame for people of color plays out in different ways and creates different modes of abjection, marginalization, and self-abnegation; it also leads to very different political strategies': these, she concludes, are structural rather than ego-based.[92] The details of this politics are not spelt out, though it is clear that Halberstam is unhappy with the diversity and extent of the shame archive as it currently exists.

Jessica Berman has wondered recently asked 'Is the Trans in Transnational the Trans in Transgender?' concluding that the comparison is at least worth making if bodies crossing borders are also, necessarily, bodies reconfigured.[93] The further question, one which emerges in trans-sex and trans-gender discourse too, is *how* these bodies get reconfigured and whether they are

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[89] Judith Halberstam, 'Shame and White Gay Masculinity' in *Social Text* Vol 23. Nos. 3-4 (2005: 219-234): 226.
[90] Biddle, Op. cit.: 232-233.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Halberstam, Op. cit.: 223.
[93] Jessica Berman, 'Is the Trans in Transnational the Trans in Transgender?' in *Modernism/modernity* Vol. 24., No. 2 (2017: 217-244).

readable in their complexity as such? If, in one story, the white man ventures abroad, encountering there the queer, painful excitement of castration, then, in another story, it is up to the not-(white)man to interrupt that journey and put an end to the perennial *Fort Da!* of a man playing with his penis. A woman is not a man, but, as Simone de Beauvoir once reminded us, neither is she a eunuch; rather she is a creature in and of transition: occupying, reading, writing, which is to say organizing, the spaces *in between*.[94] If, in one story, ours is the age of shame, in another story, according to Halberstam, it might yet become the age of shame giving way to something else.

This Book

This book does not propose to formulate shame as a single idea or concept – hence the diversity of theoretical approaches to the topic – though it does contend, as the foregoing account of overlapping discourses suggests, that, for good or ill, shame has come to bear considerable cultural weight in the modern period. It connects shame to the character of the writing self representing her own failure to write; to the blurring of the distinction between legal and psychological conceptions of guilt, and to various modern critical projects – postcolonial and feminist – which insist on the historical character of the law and the violent imperatives of looking and framing and reproducing knowledge. The essays, collected in this volume, organized in rough chronological order, provide something of a genealogy of shame's modernity, as it infiltrates the practice of writing: beginning with Montaigne and Shakespeare, moving through Rousseau and into the twentieth century. Because shame troubles the object of institutional knowledge, and because the writers writing here are working in some form within American or European institutions, we end with a series of considerations of the university, and academic writing as it is practiced today.

[94] Famously, de Beauvoir writes, 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.' (Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex.* Translated and Edited by H.M. Parshley (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books: 1987[1949]): 295.